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Puppets or Robots

Basil Milovsoroff

(Basil Milovsoroff writes, "This article is one man's opinion, and I am not as perfect as I sound, but that is the direction I am moving." Certainly no one can deny that his recent performances, with their marvelous co-ordination of puppet fantasy, movement, music and lighting leave little of his aspiration to be achieved.)

The Puppet Theatre offers us the near-ultimate in theatre make-believe. On its stage even the actor is subject to imaginative artistic treatment in his shape and even nature. Being a fully animistic theatre it can present a credible theatre spectacle not only with artistically designed images of man, animal, or insect, but also of anything from a broomstick to a teapot.

It has been said that there is no medium of artistic expression that does not have limitations, that it is these limitations that lend definite form or character to a work of art, and the more complete the fusion of the idea and the medium, the greater is the beauty, the integrity, and the value of that work of art. So it is with the Puppet Theatre. The seemingly serious limitations of the puppet of being unequal to the fluency and nuance of human motion in reality is not its weakness, but its real strength. It is these limitations that remove doubts of its artificiality and place emphasis where it properly belongs, that is, upon its indigent endowment of other motion, unlimited imagery, and animism, which give the Puppet Theatre its power to create its own artistic and dramatic values. The cumulative experience of American Puppeteers in the last decade has made this clear and seemingly simple to grasp. Yet there is so much confusion, alien realism, and pathetically inferior imitation, that much of today's puppetry is not Theatre.

It is odd to observe that while the legitimate stage, the opera, and the ballet, more and more rely for a greater effect on synthesis of their respective basic elements of spoken word, musical expression, and dance movement with imaginative artistic design in decor and costume, the Puppet Theatre with its singular powers in the satirical, fantastic, symbolic, or broadly speaking, in the imaginative, reposes to a great extent on antithetic realistic forms. Indeed, while a live actor retires to a dressing room to put on grease paint, false whiskers, and other theatrical artifice in order to heighten the visual effect of his stage character, many a puppet maker laboriously and absurdly engineers puppets in the exact image and proportion of live man, ignoring the puppet's wonderful potential for imaginative simplification and distortion. What can be more illogical? The fact that the appearance of reality is destroyed almost at the instant these realistic little robots are set in motion and reveal the antithesis of perfect human shape and conditional motion inherent in its artificial, mechanical nature, seems not to diminish much their output.

This kind of imitative puppetry is an art of a sort. Art with a small "a", of limited appeal and no real future. It will strongly persist, however, for we are all alchemists at heart, forever hoping to transmute inanimate into animate.

There are situations in which realistically designed puppets are acceptable and may even be necessary. But these, I think, are only two. The first situation is found in an honest act of imitation requiring portrait puppets of celebrities, or well known stars, so that they can be instantly recognized by the audience, and the skill of imitation of their original act can be duly appreciated for whatever excellence or corn it achieves. This is good, honest vaudeville.

The second situation is found in religious drama in which, through Biblical precept, refined Biblical illustration, and ecclesiastical statuary we have come to accept a certain noble human image of Biblical personages more as symbols than flesh and blood human beings. The puppets, although in the human image, answer better to this symbolic meaning than the live actor whose flesh and blood cannot be easily divorced from everyday banalities.

The true puppets are not realistic, being creations of an artist's flight of fancy they have no reason to hide any of their artificial characteristics as their purpose is not to copy or to imitate anything, but to create fresh theatre realities. It is in this fact of honest theatrical artificiality that lies the wonderful creative freedom and really fabulous artistic possibilities of the puppet theatre. Busily passing puppets for fake editions of live actors, we have hardly touched these. Indeed, it is hardly realized as yet that in freeing the puppet from slavish imitation of the reality of animate form, we achieve a release from the slavish imitation of the reality of animate motion, and that this release implies freedom to invent a multitude of patterns of artificial motion in conformity with the artificial nature of the puppet. The full realization of this is of the most profound importance to the future of the puppet theatre.*

Whether one produces a show beginning with the story, creating puppets for it, or produces a story with the puppets, or employs some other method in between, one cannot achieve complete success unless the puppets, the motion, and the story, as well as other supporting elements, conform to each other. (It is this conformity, or coalescence of elements that produces the necessary artistic unity, or synthesis). This can be seen in two widely familiar samples of production with puppets. Martin and Olga Stevens in producing their religious plays properly use the puppets in refined realistic style. This, combined with remarkably restrained motion, produces the visual effect of the sublime in the sublime play. The sublime nature of the play demands this. On the other hand, Burr Tillstrom creates his stories with his Kukla and Ollie, and these ludicrous puppets are supremely alive because Burr's conformity of the ludicrous situation and certain pathos, motion, and the delightful simple absurdity of his puppets remains inviolate.

With realistically designed puppets, one can be sure that outside the two legitimate uses of them indicated previously, it is all a different matter. They do not conform. The "whys" are simple. If they act in a realistic human story, which means a certain normal amount of

* An article on Motion will follow in the future.

action, they destroy the illusion of its reality by their artificial motion. I think all of us have experienced some superbly delivered lines, delivered by astonishingly realistic puppets producing a powerful sense of reality, only to have this dashed to pieces by an awkward stumble, drag, sit-down, lateral swing, pass of a foot in the air, etc., that came not only short of a natural step, or move predicated and expected, but was downright ridiculous, where the ridiculous is utterly out of place. Again, if they act in a story of imaginative fancy they appear not only too realistic, and destroy the illusion of fantasy, but also project the same old conflict within themselves between the realistic appearance and the artificial motion.

Since most puppeteers adapt a story for puppet production, it is then important to remember that in creating puppets for it one should use imaginatively form, line, and color to make apparent the visual aspects of satire, fantasy, surrealism, or whatever the content of the story, so that when the curtain opens, the spectator is taken by the puppet into the particular world the artist puppeteer intends to present. As the story unfolds, the artificial puppet and his artificial background fuse with artificial motion, with the sound, and other supporting elements, all having conforming values. The variety of arrangements of these conforming values depends on the skill, intelligence, and imagination of the creative artist-puppeteer. They are infinite as are the arrangements of color values to the painter-artist, or sound values to the musician-composer. The conformity of all elements produces the artistic unity, or synthesis which makes the show acceptable to the audience as a credible experience, an experience of new reality unmarred by trite comparisons.

A young friend, puppeteer, told me once: "It is all right for you to talk about imagination, style, and the like. You have them. I have not." My feeling is that the very fact that one is interested in puppets indicates he has imagination. Perhaps he should make an effort to give it a fuller sway. This means thinking, seeing many things, studying, working, throwing away in the waste barrel the disappointments, and starting over again, and sometimes again, and again. Real art cannot be created on a conveyer belt. It takes time, work, patience, and love.

There is nothing so disheartening at times and so gratifying on the whole as the creative process. I believe one learns to begin to comprehend the real promise of the Puppet Theatre only when one stops copying and imitating, and begins to create. The creative process in puppets starts with a simple determination not to copy, or imitate, and a conscious experiment in simplification and distortion of line, form, and motion. It is as simple as that.

In the art of the puppet theatre simplification and distortion are basic. Simplification does away with unnecessary fuss and detail that does not carry beyond the first row. It gives to the puppets and their background dramatic strength and directness of appeal. Distortion does not have to connote ugliness. It can be strikingly beautiful, pleasing, comical, extraordinarily dramatic, charmingly childlike, always artificial, theatrical. It makes puppets what they are: an inimitable medium of artistic expression.

Our libraries, bookshops, magazine stalls are filled with books, magazines, and papers which are full of all and every artificial and

satirical device and mode our cartoonists could possibly invent and draw to put across an idea. The texts of fine books devoted to the stage, opera, and ballet are profusely illustrated with stage decor and costume design, much of which is truly imaginative, enchanting. The artistic whimsy of the stage and costume design; the power of the simplest patterns in some comics and cartoons; the impact of arrangements and values of color in all of these are bound to leave an imprint on one's mind and help to stimulate his imagination. There are some of the finest Museums in the world around us, housing wonderful pictures and sculptures. The country is flooded with good music. There are theatres, opera, ballet, indeed, a myriad and one things to stir up swarms of creative ideas and add something to one's knowledge of fine art values, and their effect and use.

After all that is said, it would seem there is one thing to bear in mind, and that is that the play may be the thing, but in the puppet theatre it does not come before the puppet. The puppet, like the dancer in the ballet theatre is the axis around which all necessary theatre paraphernalia and the story revolve and adapt themselves and aid it to display its capabilities beyond and distinct from other media in the art of make believe. Remembering this, perhaps a puppeteer should suppress his impulse to do stage plays, operas, ballets with puppets. And if these beautiful arts are irrepressibly tempting, then, after some study he may find that he might interpret some of these in a peculiarly puppet way. He may find, for one thing, that the puppets might do, among other things, a superbly entertaining and intelligent lampoon of certain operas, and achieve a unique success. Or, he may find that the puppets are capable of a new range of rhythmic motion unattainable by the human body, or can translate the familiar motion with some new aesthetic charm, and thus contribute something new to the art of the dance. Or, he may find that although the puppets are unequal to the human, realistic stage play, they may interpret (not play) some of the great tragedies and give their superhuman passions fresh power and significance through the use of abstractly designed form, motion, light, and shadow, that artistically coalesce with the supernatural, and render much of the original oral building up of the emotion superfluous.

Indeed, why waste time and effort on imitations, when there is so much for the puppeteer and the puppets to put in order, and to do in the Art of their own Theatre?



American Folklore to the Fore

Dr. Elizabeth Pilant

(Dr. Elizabeth Pilant, of the Ball State College Department of English, called the first national conference on American folklore for children, at Muncie, Indiana, two years ago. A national organization was established at that time. Dr. Pilant was chosen Executive Secretary, a position she holds at the present time.

A recognized authority on American folklore, Dr. Pilant has done much to further its promotion and study thru her association with national organizations. She has contributed to many text and writings on folklore, including the **American Dictionary of Folklore** and the **Child's World Encyclopedia**.)

You will, dear reader, agree with me that any one writing for the **Puppetry Journal** should have pulled some strings . . . in fact . . . many strings on many marionettes. But I have not pulled one, although I have often been on the edge of the seat in the front row where puppets of any description were performing. And in my classes in children's literature and American folklore, I frequently have students who elect to do an original project inspired by Punchinello's progeny or ancestors.

For example, a junior who is prominent in dramatics on our campus (Ball State) has just turned in an excellent resume of how to make many types of puppets. He will follow this up by developing a show which is based on our favorite Indiana-Ohio folk hero, Johnny Appleseed. He is using **A Bibliography of American Folklore and Folk Songs** by Charles Haywood (Greenberg; publisher), wherein there are many pages of references to the immortal John Chapman. This is the first and only comprehensive bibliography of our folk heritage, an indispensable reference volume for any interested in the field. Otherwise, he would have depended upon the doctoral dissertation on Johnny by Dr. Robert Price of Otterbein College or the research of Mabel Leigh Hunt, author of **Better Known As Johnny Appleseed**, runner-up for the Newberry Prize this year. Miss Hunt has recaptured the spirit and speech of the folk of more than a century ago in these parts.

Now that the junior has the factual and literary background for his scenario, the technical problems of characters and staging remain to be dealt with expeditiously. A dried apple head would, of course, be very appealing, but would it satisfy such practical considerations as flexibility and durability? Would the cornhusk pioneer family (from our collection of folk arts) survive many performances? Would a generous use of the animals with which Johnny talked present too many problems for an enterprising student to solve on his own? As you know, the literature on puppetry deals much more with human beings as characters than with our fourfooted friends. Yet animalness is rated as one of the strongest, if not the strongest, basic appeal for children in all storytelling.

I see no reason why puppetry must be so exclusively concerned with human beings. Children with whom I once worked as a recreational director at the old Wawona Dude Ranch (now a part of Yosemite National Park) had great fun with shadow shows that featured animals of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Borrowing from that experience, we may solve one of our present problems by having animals of different types of construction . . . some manipulated by strings from above, others by sticks from below, and still others by means of a shifting flashlight from behind a screen. For the latter, as a night scene, we can pin silhouettes of many of Johnny's animal friends to a sheet-type backdrop. Then we can create action by moving a flashlight so as to cause the shadows to shift.

A former student of mine, Helen Trentadue, has had great success using our folk tales with puppets as summer recreational director at Monroeville, Indiana. She reports that during last summer she was playground supervisor and storyteller for 1,739 children. She says:

"Why not choose the ever-fascinating, near to the heart folk tales of our own people, enliven these tales with some good character acting and you have a performance that will interest children and adults as well. Adults will be telling the children, 'Well, now I heard it this way.' Johnny Appleseed, Mike Fink, Pecos Bill, and Davy Crockett take on new meaning as children get acquainted with frontier talk of these characters. It can give them a real live picture of the development of this country. Folk music to accompany the stories can add much to the authentic scene."

But enough of specific projects. You will, no doubt, wish to work with a character dear to the hearts of your own community. If so, write to the Scott, Foresman Company at Chicago for a gaily-colored wall map of American folklore. On it more than one hundred fifty live characters peep forth . . . human, animal, and even vegetable. Yes, Idahoans, from the *Friend's Magazine* for November, 1950, you can learn all you need on technique in connection with potato puppets. Botkin's *Treasury of American Folklore* (and subsequent regional treasuries) will furnish much of the raw material for dramatization. See the *State Guidebooks* prepared by the WPA during the thirties, and such series as those dealing with our rivers, lakes, highways, mountains, folkways.

Here are a few specific books for children that might well be mentioned. If you want a more complete list, please write me here at Ball State in my capacity as Executive Secretary, National Conference American Folklore for Youth.

Peck, Leigh: *Don Coyote*, Houghton Mifflin

Field, Rachel: *American Folk and Fairy Tales*, Scribner's

Blair, Walter: *Tall Tale America*, Coward-McCann

Felton, Harold W.: *Legends of Paul Bunyan*, Knopf

Malcolmson, Anne: *Yankee Doodle's Cousin*, Houghton Mifflin

Miller, Olive Beaupre: *Heroes, Outlaws, and Funny Fellows*, Doubleday.

Carmer, Carl: *America Sings*, Knopf

Seeger, Ruth Crawford: *American Folk Songs for Children*, Doubleday.

Living in our America, Quillen and Krug, Scott-Foresman, a textbook in the social studies at junior high level, has many excellent bibliographies on regional and historical novels and stories of our country for youngsters. Films and music are also listed. **Ethnic Folkways Recordings** and **Encyclopedia Britannica Films** have excellent musical recordings to use with American folk tale dramatizations.

To return to an earlier item, some animals are poking persistent noses around the curtain edges again. This time they say, "Why not have a verse choir tell about us or a chorus sing about us as we appear in Ruth Crawford Seeger's **Animal Folk Songs**?" The words she furnishes can serve largely as the script and the excellent illustrations furnish ideas for the puppets themselves. They say, "Let us speak in the words of Longfellow's **Hiawatha** or Harris' **Uncle Remus**?"

Such states as have a folklore society or a very efficient state historical society will have excellent materials in their publications. Watch your local papers, Sunday supplements, magazines for children, especially **American Heritage**. **Junior Scholastic** magazine has featured folk heroes during the past year. **Story Parade** has used a good many folk tales and we understand is scheduled to do much more in that respect in the near future. But best of all, do some collecting on your own in your own local lore. Get the children to help you. The now famous **Montana Study** culminated each time in each community with a local pageant about the town, written by its own people about themselves and enacted by them. See last September issue of **Reader's Digest** for short summary in article by Poston, "Small Town Renaissance."

To get down to some of the fundamental reasons why our folk tale heritage is ideally suited for puppetry purposes . . . it is primarily oral literature . . . and even printing it cannot change this fundamental character once it has been in the oral tradition. As oral literature it possesses in abundance those qualities which make for good theatre. In plot it tends to simple direct action, strong characterization of a few key figures. In speech, it is vigorous, colloquial, down-to-earth. In form it is dialogistic, smacking of the verbal exchange.

Note: Information about the folklore organization may be had from Dr. E. Pilant, Ex. Sec., National Conference American Folklore for Youth, Ball State College, Muncie, Indiana.



From the Other Side of the Stage

Frances Schramm

(Frances Schramm is Director of Brigg's Management, a Specialized Bureau of Children's Theatre, in New York City. Their agency has probably booked more professional puppet shows than any other agency in the country. Queried as to what an entertainment agency looks for when auditioning a new show, Mrs. Schramm gives "one woman's opinion.")

When I go to see a puppet show, frankly, it must entertain me before I can think of it in terms of a young audience.

1. It must have true characterization. The puppeteer must be a competent actor. The puppet, beautifully modeled, costumed and set in beautiful surroundings, still fails to project without convincing voice work, and carefully rehearsed, skillful manipulation.
2. The script must be interesting. Youngsters love the familiar, we all know, but the familiar can become quite ordinary. Here the puppeteer can stimulate the child's expanding interest by worthwhile scripting. Not many do!
3. It must have showmanship. I see puppetry as a theater art. Its novelty factor is actually nil (television has brought puppets into the home, making them a commonplace and ordinary experience.) The puppeteer must have at his command all the tools of the theater arts . . . he must give the child a real theater experience. It is this that will establish puppetry in the whole field of theater for children.

I would like to comment that I have encountered some resistance from some of the sponsoring groups to the repeated scheduling of puppet shows on their series. Their comments have run: "The first year we had puppets the children's response was very satisfactory, but each year it has lessened"; "They get more from live actors no matter how often we bring live drama productions"; "Only the children who are ideally seated enjoy the puppet shows,—for our auditorium we think we need something else." All these I get often.

It is very evident today that there is a widening interest and activity in the scheduling of theater events for children. This is attracting well equipped and well trained talent to work in this field and this serves to maintain and steadily raise the standard of production. It is to the puppeteer's interest to follow this trend in his own endeavors and medium, in order to create for himself a secure niche in the children's theater world.



Flahooley

A MAGICAL MUSICAL ABOUT A LAUGHING DOLL BLENDS PUPPETRY WITH PEOPLE

The Bairds,—meaning Bil and Cora, have scored again. This time it is in the new musical, "Flahooley", which, according to critics, has something of "Babes in Toyland", a touch of "Wizard of Oz", a suggestion of "Finnian's Rainbow", and a very definite charm of its own.

"Flahooley", produced by Cheryl Crawford who brought out "Brigadoon", opened during April in New Haven, moved to the Schubert in Philadelphia, and is now playing on Broadway. Critics have been writing glowing reports of it,—hailing it as the "freshest and most tuneful musical that has hit the town for many a day".

According to Bil, the offer to work in "Flahooley" was irresistible, for, as he points out, "Puppets are a part of the very fabric of the show". The shows blends puppets with living actors in a manner which makes it hard to say which has the most charm and appeal.

The story,—it is spring in Capsulanti, Indiana. A toy manufacturing firm is scouting for a Christmas novelty. A humble employee offers a "laughing" doll. Here is the novelty.

The idea is stolen by a rival firm. The young inventor is in distress until an Arab customer comes along with an ancient lamp, which produces a genie to obey the inventor's commands. Asking for a method of cheap production, he is able to flood the market with "Flahooleys" until, like potatoes, they have to be plowed under. Action moves fast and furiously from here, but the ending is a happy one.

The puppets,—according to one reviewer. "They do everything! They speak, sing, dance, make love, drive a reindeer sleigh, roar, (there is a British lion in the cast), give advice, (thru character puppets of Lincoln and F. D. R.), take an active part from their puppet stage in the toy factory, and even come to life,—at least "Flahooley" does."

All of which only proves again that nothing is impossible with the Bairds directing the puppet production end of the show. "Flahooley" is a "must" on your theater list.

Confessions of a Puppeteer

Lyle Brooks Watson

It was my first time at Oxford, my first meeting with others who are interested in puppetry, and my first realization of what the P of A is and does. I had joined what I thought was a nice clubby little group who got together at a sort of convention or reunion once a year to swap stories, shows, and ideas, but I was a little reserved in my enthusiasm and more than a little suspicious of any group of puppeteers who professed themselves to be an "organization." Natalie and I are sisters when it comes to "clubs." Too bad Natalie didn't make it to the Festival as I did. She'd have been educated, allayed with kindness, overjoyed to the point of

having all her reservations stampeded, and tickled every shade of pink and purple at meeting so many people with such a variety of interests evolving in puppetry. She'd have found her ego burst and deflated along with all those balloons and walked from the performances humbled and challenged, as did I, only to meet someone who thought himself much more insignificant and unskilled, or someone whose faith in her unproven ability gave her new hope and ambition.

All of which makes the Festival sound like a pretty upsetting experience to a hopefully and timidly budding young professional. It most assuredly was not. I, for one, have never packed four days so full of laughs, good food, good fun, and inspiration. My only regret is that I didn't hear about P of A sooner, join sooner, and stay longer at Western. I missed the Institute and I'm still mopping up the tears I shed at leaving.

Pity the Puppets

(Courtesy of Time, Copyright Time Inc., 1951.)

For centuries Kasperle, a long-nosed marionette with the virtues of Galahad and the deportment of Mortimer Snerd, has been muddling his way to victory over the villains of Germany's popular puppet dramas. Last week at a Berlin congress of 400 East German puppeteers, Professor Sergei Obraslov, director of Moscow's State Central Puppet Theatre, explained the changed duties of Kasperle and other puppet characters in a Soviet state.

Kasperle's new model should be his Russian cousin Petrushka. The Bolsheviks first banished Petrushka from the Russian puppet stage, as "an outdated anarchist figure." After the building of the Soviet state, Obraslov said, Puppet Petrushka was revived "and given significant tasks." German puppeteers, however, must be careful not to turn the converted Kasperle into a Communist Party functionary. Warned Obraslov: "It would do harm not only to party functionaries but to the personality of Kasperle himself."

Obraslov told his German colleagues that German puppet plays were not up to revolutionary par, that they failed to stress present-day themes. Concluded Obraslov: "You must attack evil conditions."

Loyally responding to the challenge, one German delegate outlined the plot of a brand-new puppet play recently produced in Dresden. Its heroine, a little girl named Annamie, writes a letter to Stalin saying: "You never have any time, you poor man, to sleep at night, because you have to work for peace day and night." Touched, Stalin invites Annamie to visit him in the Kremlin.

While she is there, the Devil, a traditional puppet character now toggled out as an American spy, enters and attempts to lure Stalin away from his peacemaking. The Devil is promptly killed. Shortly thereafter, Death himself arrives to inform Stalin that his time is up. "Oh no," pleads Stalin, "I am so busy, I have to work for peace!" Impressed, Death exits gracefully and leaves Stalin master of the scene.

It looked as if poor Kasperle might soon be out of the running altogether, in favor of a newer hero.



PUPPET PARADE

(see photo section)

BASIL MILOVSOROFF

These two fantastic creatures created by Basil Milovsoroff are typical of his newest puppets which he so enthusiastically advocates in his article in this issue, "Robots and Puppets", however to fully appreciate them, one must see them in action. Movement, music, shadows all combine to create a harmonious whole.

BIL BAIRD

Slug O'Ryan, honky tonk piano player needs no introduction to the thousands who have followed Bil Baird's TV show throughout the last year. Used as an intro to the "Snarky Parker" series he has become one of the most popular puppets on TV. For the time being the Bairds are devoting most of their time to the musical, "Flahooley", reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

BOB BAKER PRODUCTIONS

This photograph from the R. K. O. picture, *Hunt The Man Down*, - shows Tina Price on the bridge, Gig Young holding puppet, and Bob Baker.

Writing from Hollywood, Bob says, "One of my chief jobs out here has been supplying puppets for backgrounds in films." In addition to that, children's parties for movie stars have occupied considerable of their time, and have included, among many others the following stars, - Gloria Swanson, Robert Taylor, Jack Benny, Helen Hayes, Joan Crawford and Betty Grable. In addition they do shows for department stores, spots on TV, including TV commercials, and are now building a special production for the Orange Show.

ALFRED WALLACE

According to Alfred, this is a picture of "Me, I, and some of the Wallace puppets". Uncle Sam is from a Wallace commercial, and Acro, the Acrobat is from the ever popular "Johnny Gremlin Varieties."

Alfred Wallace, is one of the top notch professionals who works almost exclusively with hand or hand and rod puppets. Much of his work has been with adult audiences . . . his early productions included musical revues, operettas, etc., finally resulting in a most successful nightclub act called, "Alfred Wallace and His Dancing Puppets". "A Show Within a Show" played over 1600 performances between 1940 and 1943. In 1944 he went overseas for a six months tour with a USO unit. Since then, "Johnny Gremlin Varieties", "Goober Is My Name", "Kitty Kat" and of late the charming "Forgetful Forest", have been produced and played from coast to coast.





by

Basil Milovsoroff



by
Bil Baird



Bob Baker..Productions



**Uncle
Sam**



**Acro
the
Acrobat**

Alfred Wallace





CLAWSON HALL

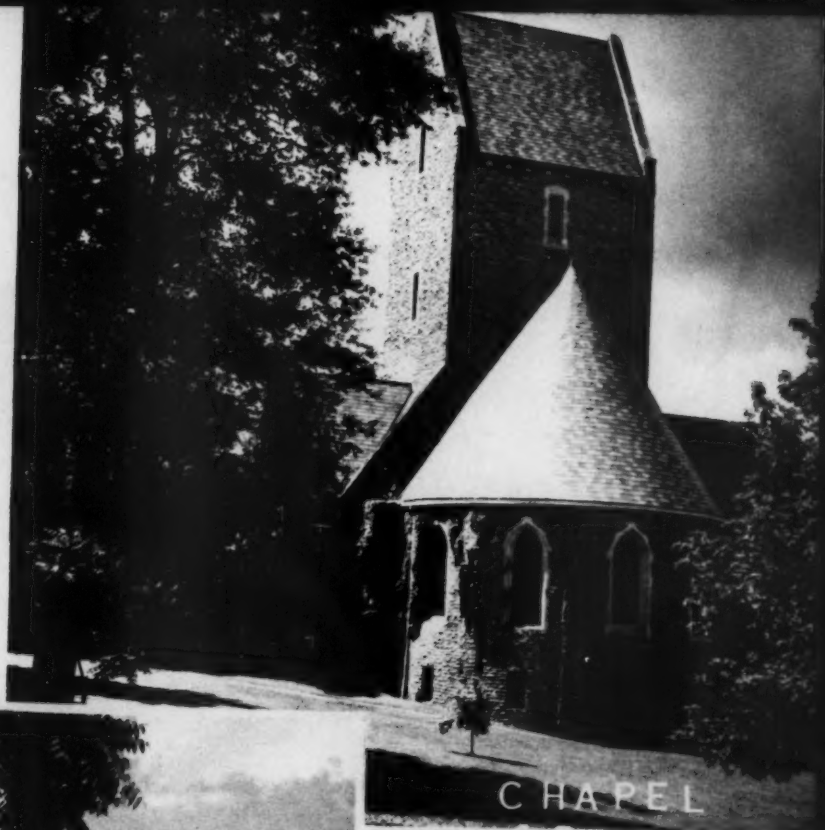
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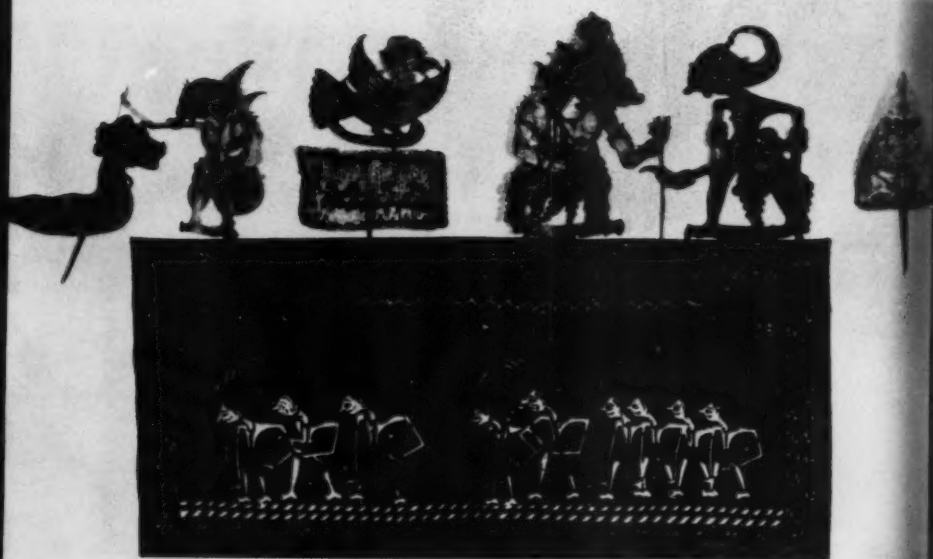


Exhibit...1950...Festival



P of A Institute...1950

Moppets and Puppets



Historical Collection



WESTERN COLLEGE

Located in southern Ohio, in the beautiful Miami valley, Western College offers you all of its facilities for the 1951 Puppeteers of America Festival and Institute.

Edith Clawson Hall . . . A beautiful new dormitory offers you its rooms, its dining hall, its lounge, its recreation rooms and patio. This will be registration headquarters for the Festival and Institute. In addition to this, it houses the permanent executive office of the P. of A. Furnished since last year, this new modern office is equipped with practical office furniture and equipment which facilitate the handling of P of A records, and the huge amount of correspondence and mailing which has been brought about by the increased membership.

The Chapel . . . one of the most impressive spots on the campus.

Presser Hall . . . Public performances are held in Presser Hall Auditorium which seats 750 people. Located along the main highway, it is ideally situated for this purpose, and was filled to capacity last summer.

This page, showing less than half of the buildings available to the P of A for the Festival and Institute, can in no way depict the beauty and restfulness of Western College campus. With out the Festival or the Institute, it would be an ideal vacation spot,—with both of these available . . . no puppeteer can afford to miss it.

ART LEWIS ZAPEL

Left to right . . . Blossom, the pugnacious Koala; Scrumpy, the original shaggy dog; J. Willowby Wilfred, the Walrus, and Jeremy Jones, boy pilot.

Above . . . Professor DuFunny, . . . all characters in Arthur's "Du-Funny Follies."

Art Zapel, member of the **Journal** publication board, and former production manager of station WOWO, Ft. Wayne, Indiana is now associated with Galbreath Picture Productions, Inc., of the same address, as director of scripts and scenarios and in addition doubles as dramatic director and producer. Art says, "We film TV movies. Right now we are preparing a mystery series, and hope soon to have another short story series ready for distribution, which promises to be comparable to our successful **Paradox** show which was shown in almost every TV city in the country."

ESTHER CHEATLE AND DAVID MEHLIN

Arriving at the **Journal** office the same day, these two photos tell an interesting story. One of Esther Cheatle, M.D. an intern at the Wesley Memorial Hospital in Chicago, and the other of David Mehlin, age 10, son of Dr. Theodore G. Mehlin, professor of astronomy at Williams College, of Williamstown, Mass.

Esther Cheatle was a charter member of the P of A . . . a Junior before the Juniors formed their own organization.

Her interest in puppets began when she was in elementary school. After attending her first puppet show, a Sarg version of "Jack and the Beanstalk," she made her first puppet;—an original creation of peanuts strung on cord. Altho she searched the library for material

to help her, little was available and her first puppets, more or less experimental, went thru several stages of development before arriving at their present status.

Her Dad was finally prevailed upon to build a stage . . . The garage, seating 30, became a neighborhood theater . . . and the puppet business began to expand. Calls from churches, lodges and hospitals kept her busy through high school and college days. Her mother and her 4-H girls filled in when Esther was too busy. During her medical school days at Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania, and now, Esther has helped to meet expenses by booking shows.

The Wesley Memo says of Esther, "At a recent show she staged for the children in Pediatrics, Dr. Cheatle came in carrying a large black suit case. Disappointed looks passed over the kid's faces as tho they had expected to see a circus wagon roll in. As soon as the case was opened however, even the most ailing youngster perked up. The suit case had the same effect as does the famous and fabulous Ringling Bros. Model T Ford which pours out dozens of clowns."

It is unnecessary to point out that the effects of Dr. Cheatle's puppet show on hospitalized children indicates the value of puppetry in the treatment of low spirits in the sick as well as in the healthy. Volunteer puppeteers will find this a most satisfying outlet for their puppet activities and in practically all cases will be heartily welcomed by hospital staffs.

And from David Mehlin, age 10, (a Boy Scout and a Junior P of A member) comes this letter.

"Just before Christmas I had fun giving my show to the children in the children's ward of the North Adams Hospital. The puppets were made by my Dad. He also made the stage which is a portable, folding one.

I like to write my own little plays, and altho my Mom and Dad help me set up the stage, I work all the marionettes myself.

I just love giving shows, especially to little children.

I am saving all my money now to go out to the Festival at Oxford, so I'll be seeing you soon."

Sincerely, David

The North Adams Transcript says, "No holiday lights will ever be brighter than those that shone in the eyes of the youngsters of North Adams Hospital when a special Christmas party was held for the patients in the childrens ward.

There was a moist glistening in the eyes of the hospital staff as they watched the little invalids gazing with rapt delight at the puppet show presented by 10 year old David Mehlin, which was the feature of the Christmas treat."

EXHIBIT 1950 FESTIVAL

Just a small section representing about one twentieth of the 1950 puppet exhibit in the gymnasium at Western College. This particular section was devoted to historic puppets. Exhibit booths have been increased this year approximately one half to care for the additional displays expected. It will be without doubt the most outstanding exhibit ever assembled.

P OF A INSTITUTE

Members of the Institute class took "time out" from their eight days of strenuous puppet making, to pose for this picture in the attractive Nature Theatre. This was also the site for the get acquainted square dance jamboree which ushered in the Festival.

MOPPETS AND PUPPETS

An outstanding exhibition held recently at the Denver Art Museum showed not only puppets by contemporary puppeteers but a fine collection of historical puppets including antique Punch and Judy figures, figures from the Italian Commedia del Arts, curious puppets from early American medicine men, puppets from old Mexico, Chinese shadow puppets and the stately Javanese rod puppets shown here. Co-sponsored by the Museum and The Puppeteers of America, it attracted a great deal of attention and in addition to creating intense interest in puppetry in that area, has prompted several other groups to initiate similar projects.

Regional Activities

The increase in the regional meetings and exhibits held in co-operation with the P of A is a marked tribute to the effectiveness and growth of the organization.

Twin City Puppeteers and the University of Minnesota will hold a regional meeting and workshop in July. Lem William and Helen Farnum in charge, it is presumed, although particulars have not been received.

Seattle, under the direction of Josie Robbins, held a most successful regional meeting, last June. It will be repeated this year.

State Teachers College, Wayne, Nebraska, are sponsoring the Duncans for a public performance and workshop during the summer session.

Bill Ryan sends an interesting program of the recent exhibition of puppets at Yale University Museum, entitled "Puppets in the American Theater," which was also arranged in cooperation with the P. of A.

Council Notes

The 1951 Membership Directory shows an impressive list of names. Your council voted to have the lists compiled and printed once a year, so that all names could be included for easy reference. We hope that the listing by states will help you to contact other P of A members in your area for group meetings and discussions.

With the sizable increase in membership, we are moving forward to increase the scope and service of the organization. There will be increasing opportunities for you to participate in the activities which will make the expansion a success. Work committees have been set up to take action on the following program.

Guilds—The success of the Detroit Puppeteers Guild and similar groups points to the growing interest in regional activities throughout the year. This committee is working on a plan to assist other groups in organizing as affiliates of the Puppeteers of America.

Play Study Committee—We have had many requests for puppet play scripts. The committee will collect play scripts and make recommendations for publishing the most useful ones. These plays will be made available to members for a nominal fee to cover the cost of mimeographing or printing and mailing.

Traveling Museum Exhibit—An exhibition of representative American and foreign puppetry is being planned and assembled by this committee. Under the sponsorship of the Puppeteers of America, this exhibit will be made available to museums all over the country.

Educational Exhibit—On a smaller scale "How-To-Do-It" exhibits are being planned and will be constructed for use by educational groups, libraries, etc.

Teaching Aids Committee—The committee will recommend and prepare work sheets, with illustrations, working drawings and text, on various types and techniques of puppet construction.

Visual Aids Committee—The P of A already has a start on its slide library. The committee is looking for good slides that are available on puppetry; the film slide library will be used to supplement the traveling museum exhibit. Photographs are being collected for a portfolio of puppetry.

Note: The play enclosed with this copy of the Journal was printed last June, but because of copyright difficulties, it was impossible to release it sooner. Permission to reprint it was secured by George Latshaw. We are indebted to Herb Scheffel for the cover and illustrations . . . also for the cover of the membership directory.



International Puppet News

Marjorie Batchelder McPharlin

"Puppetry in Germany Since the War." (continued)

Educational puppetry was stressed in the Art Pedagogical Congress held at Fulda in November 1949. The program was arranged by Prof. Leo Weismantel on the general subject of "The Creative Child." Well known teachers from various parts of Germany as well as from Austria and Switzerland contributed to the discussions.

In the Russian zone, the puppeteers of the area held a festival and extensive exhibit in December 1949. There were modern and historical puppets, books, and stage settings, with performances by six members of the Verband Deutscher Puppenspieler.

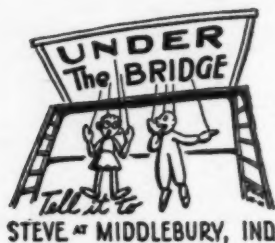
For three weeks before Christmas 1949, another large puppet exhibit was held at the Voelker-Kunde Museum in Hamburg—jointly sponsored by the North German Puppetry Union, the Trade Union of Arts and Crafts, and the publishing firm of Die Welt. It was arranged as a huge Christmas fair, with innumerable exhibitors displaying their wares. In the puppet section could be found booths selling puppets, heads, stages, and all sorts of accessories. Max Jacob's Hohnsteiner theatre presented "The Lion has a Toothache," and "Till Eulenspiegel", alternately with other puppet theatres of the region. These shows were always a climax to the tours arranged for orphans and children of refugees by the Christmas Welfare Organizations. A hallway connecting two rooms of the Fair was devoted to the display of puppets—a strategic position because people were compelled to pass by! Representative work of German puppeteers was shown in attractive groupings, with Oriental figures from the Voelker-Kunde Museum, and an unusual arrangement of modern shadows made by Margaret Cordes and other shadow players. Other cases contained photographs and books, with a few publications from other foreign countries (unfortunately, nothing from America).

Among the local groups specializing in a particular aspect of puppet art is The Circle of German Shadow Players in Hamburg, led by Mrs. Margaret Cordes. From October 6 to 15, 1949, the first general meeting of shadow players was held at Barsbuettel. People came, more than 40 of them, from all over Germany. Dr. Max Buehrmann, a pupil of the late Prof. George Jacob whose writings on the shadow theatre are the authoritative works on the subject, gave a lecture on the historical shadow theatre and manipulated some of the Javanese, Siamese, and Turkish figures from his collection.

A number of performances were given. The most impressive play was presented by Annemarie Blochmann from Weimar. It was a Chinese fairy tale, "The Flute Player" with figures of her design shown against exquisite landscape backgrounds, and accompanied by music of the piano, violin, and flute. Annemarie Kauffmann contributed a humorous play in contrasting mood, and her own version of "Hansel and Gretel." Everybody was generous in explaining his own techniques. Mrs. Hede Reidelbach of Doessenheim showed how she cut out and assembled the figures, while Prof. Otto Kraemer, of the Technical High School in Karlsruhe, explained the construction of his plywood figures with their skillfully made joints and unusual system of manipulation. Like many German puppeteers, Kraemer is intrigued by the Faust play, which he has done with shadows, being convinced that no other type of puppet can so well convey the full force of the story.

At least some German puppeteers are again travelling abroad. The Hohnsteiner Theatre of Max Jacob made a tour of Sweden with 45 performances which were seen by more than 14,000 people. The old version of "Faust" which influenced Goethe was presented. As part of the celebration of Goethe year, the German text was printed and used in German classes in Swedish schools and colleges, so that the puppets were well appreciated and understood, despite the language barrier.

This account barely touches the high points of all that has been going on in Germany since the war. As Richard Winzer expresses it, "we go forward, hopeful and confident, being convinced that puppetry is doing its modest share in realizing a good friendship between the nations."



Joe Allen Price did the murder scene from "Macbeth at the Alabama Drama Festival the first of March . . . **Herb Scheffel** won't make the Festival 'cause he sails June 27 for Europe! **Bubbles Divine** goes with him, and will return an international star. Turn about's fair play, so Europe is sending us **Herman Aicher** and the **Salzburg Marionette Theater** in Oct., Nov., and Dec. Tape recordings in English, and 10 puppeteers . . .

Nelly Mendham did a new shadow show, "Alice in the Y. W. C. A." on K.S.D.-TV April 13 . . . **Don & Ruth Gilpin** and **Rod Young** visited **Louisa Mustin's** Puppet Playhouse in Augusta April 14. seeing James Thurber's "Thirteen Clocks." In the cast were **George Nelle**, **Dale Adams**, **Jimmy Schaw**, and **Richard Adams**, with lights and sound by **Marion Anderson**. They did "Clocks" through April, had scheduled "Amphitryon 38" and "When We Were Very Young" for May. The **Gilpin's Woody Willows** who starts his fourth season this Fall on W. S. B.-TV., was visited by **Louise & Kent More** en route to a date in Knoxville . . . **Mrs. Scott**, at Carmel, is recovering from polio, and may take the show out again. **Hilton** recently auditioned for TV in San Francisco.

Our **Lea Wallace** left New York on a tour with a new nite club act, Jan. 7th. In Boise, Idaho, she met **Helen Edwards, Jr.** League puppetry chairman, and saw the League working on their new Jack and the Beanstalk. Didn't see a show, but the settings and puppets were terrific. In Portland Oregon **Dorothy De Weese** (who wears the same title as Helen above) invited her to a really grand performance of "Millie Presents". League puppet group there was organized two years ago, opening show,—**Nestor**. They have two companies, 6 manipulators in each, plus a crew of 3 people. About 6 others involved in the puppet-making. Lea enjoyed their performance very much. In Seattle she was entertained by **Josie Robbins**, and reports that the group there is very active, and a credit to the P. of A.! In Everett, Wash., she met **Mrs. Thomas Clement**, member of the Hi-Ho Puppeteers, a group of nine (1 man) who have been in active production for 6 years. Standard fairy tales, and at the moment, "The King's Toothache."

Bill Shuring, Greenwich Village, building "Song of Songs", with animal puppets, played in front of a stained glass window, and with a specially written score. Sounds very interesting . . . **Dion, Bruce, & Ralph Cheese** and **Lettie Connell** did "The Easter Egg Witch" at the San Francisco Emporium Mar. 17-28 . . . **The Lesellis** were at the Downtown there week of Mar. 4 . . .

Shirley & Russell Quam and **Bernice Mitchell**, "The Continental Puppeteers" of Phoenix, are pretty happy about puppets. Doing their first real performance" last Dec., they're really already performing pro-

professionally, their daughter **Karen** has appeared with puppets on KPHO-TV, and they may be the Sat. matinee children's feature of the new Little Theatre! P of A boosters, they especially appreciate encouragement they received from **Al Wallace** who, by the way, married **Ethel Bart James** in New London, Conn., on Apr. 6 and then had their wedding breakfast with **Rufus & Margo Rose** at the latter's studio in Waterford. (Ed. challenge: Find me anybody who can get more news than that in one paragraph! I dast yuh!)

Working with the Bairds in the musical Flahooley are **Carl Harms** and someone who in Carl's handwriting looks like **Frana Faaakas**. Correction, please.

Dear Correspondents: let this be a lesson to you. When you send us names, please be legible, and spare yourselves the fate of that poor innocent above who wound up with a name like **Faaakas**. Or was it **Fzzzlczs**? I couldn't tell.

Barbara Amundson has been play-doctor to the East Lansing Jr. League's "Billygoats Gruff", and birthday-party-showing. **Jean Starr Wiksell** had an institute in Lansing on Feb. 5, with **Polly McKouen** as chairman. They plan to help Community Chest. Jean is doing the historical section of the forthcoming Jr. League Puppetry Handbook, as well as the one on organization . . . **Pauline Benton** is said to have been dreaming up some shadows for TV a while back. How'd it come out, Miss B.?

Speaking of European invasions, any of you heard about the British puppet-ballet troupe called the "Ministars"? . . . **Gayle & Doug Anderson** have a swell new photo-offset postcard advertising piece, offering vent, chaktalk, magic, and puppets . . . The **Cole Marionettes** had their share of excitement this season: puppeteers shifted around like footballers, staff being drafted, a P.A. and speaker, and two cases of "Dick Whittington" puppets stolen (the puppets were recovered), and a near-fatal accident with a broken axle. And never a date missed! . . .

Henry Bockwoldt recommends reading Alexandra Orme's book "Comes the Comrade" for a report "as true as one can describe the Russians." He had a visit from **Marjorie Shanafelt** when she visited Denmark at Christmas. She did puppets on shipboard, too . . . **Rich. Winzer**, Luebeck-Schlutup, 4-8 Boegengang, Schleswig-Holstein, Brit. Zone, Germany, wants to swap publicity . . .

Margo & Rufus Rose making TV puppets of the radio-heroes **Big Jon & Sparky** . . . **Burr Tillstrom's** "Cecil Bill", who never says anything but "Twee twee" anyhow, recently did a "production number" of "Hot Canary". Terrific . . . You who have visited the Stevens **Mousetrap** would not know the old place: stage torn out, theatre gone, it has developed into a full fledged Moon Pitcher studio. Such excitement!

Correspondent writes in that she loves the **Journal**, but wishes it came out oftener. My my—do you gray-beards remember when there weren't no **Journal** at all, nor no P of A, nor no Festival! Makes me happier than ever that I can go to Oxford this summer, and see you all in person. Goody and goody. Hardly wait. Meantime—thanks to your membership—there's another **Journal** coming up, so send me news about yourselves: if I don't see you at Oxford, I want more than ever to hear from you, and so does everybody.

Steve, Middlebury, Ind.

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